

The South West London Collaborative Staff Bank Case Study

Using a collaborative bank across South West London to bring down agency spend



At a time when just under half (44 per cent) of all NHS trusts are in deficit, reducing reliance on agency staff is one way that trusts can improve their financial position.

According to NHS Improvement, since it introduced the agency rules in October 2015, trusts in England have reduced their combined spend on agency staff by over £1 billion.

Summary

One initiative which has been particularly successful at reducing agency spend is the South West London Collaborative. NHS trusts in South West London came together in early 2017 to create a collaborative bank to share staff and limit the expenditure on sourcing workers from external agencies.

This was the first NHS staff-sharing platform of its kind integrating rostering and bank to provide visibility of working patterns across a region. With a go live date of April 2018, the collaborative bank intends to make financial savings in 2018/19 financial year and beyond by providing the opportunity for substantive and bank only nurses to work at the other trusts therefore reducing the reliance and savings from agency staff.

The collaborative also aims to retain staff working within the STP (Sustainability and Transformation Partnership). St George's Healthcare NHS Trust, Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust have gone live in the first phase with prospects of the two trusts in the STP joining at a later stage.

Making the collaborative bank work with CloudStaff

Allocate created the Me App and worked in partnership with the SWL Collaborative to develop the app which enables staff to view and book vacant shifts from their smartphone. CloudStaff was used to integrate available shifts at every trust onto a single platform. This meant that workers registered at one staff bank could see and easily book onto and be paid for vacant shifts at any of the other partner trusts. The trusts involved have also harmonised processes and practices to make it easy to work and get paid on time. We spoke to Sue Winter, human resource director about the collaborative bank to find out what were the benefits for the trust and staff.

“There is significant pressure on trusts financially and the big area to focus on is agency spend – we will never get it down to zero, but this is a great way to ensure that agency spend reduces and reduces significantly.”

Sue Winter, Human Resources Director

Why did the trusts want to set up a collaborative staff bank?

We wanted to reduce agency spend in line with national guidance and put a cap on agency spend across the three Trusts.

What were the challenges faced and how did you overcome them?

The first challenge to overcome was to harmonise processes and policies, including pay rates, for staff across our three acute trusts. The core team with leads from each trust worked closely to ensure common pay rates and that policies and processes were consistent.

Another significant challenge was to ensure an effective communication strategy across more than 70 wards with information and regular updates about the bank. The Allocate team worked closely with us to make this possible. Feedback from staff showed this had been a positive experience both during and after the roll out.

What are the benefits of the collaborative staff bank?

From the trusts' perspective, CloudStaff has helped us match the workforce in South West London with the temporary staffing needs of individual trusts. This has helped increase our shift fill rates and reduce reliance on agency workers, reducing costs thereby improving the quality of care delivered to our patients.

For our employees, they are now able to plan their working lives better. The Me App gives them exclusive access to all available temporary shifts in South West London six weeks in advance, so they can book shifts conveniently and get exposure to a variety of clinical settings to support their skills and career development.

What has been the staff response to the collaborative bank?

We have received a great response from staff. Within 12 weeks of launch, we have rolled out to 76 wards in the three trusts. There are over 600 staff workers on the bank with 1500 nurses who have downloaded the Me App onto their smartphone.

Why would you recommend CloudStaff?

Allocate's approach has been professional and because HealthRoster and Me App technology have interfaced with the bank software, it ensures maximum benefit for the end user.

"We found we all share the same group of staff – be they substantive staff working in another hospital on their bank, or vice versa. We asked ourselves: 'Why are we paying money to an agency to give our own staff back to us if collectively as an STP we can make it easy for staff to move around if they want to do so?'"

Sue Winter, Human Resources Director, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust

"Staff now have the ability to plan their lives better because the Me App allows nurses and other groups of staff to book vacant shifts via their smartphones. If you are a Band 5 nurse and working at St Helier and the roster has gone out, it then cascades to other trusts after 4 weeks. This means you can see a vacant shift at Kingston, work that shift and get paid by the trust. It also extends their career opportunities as well because a nurse can say I have worked at two other trusts as well as my own."

Chris Goulding, Project Manager, SWL Collaborative

Key Benefits for the collaborative bank

- CloudStaff enables the sharing of staff between organisations in the collaborative reducing reliance on agencies to contract temporary workforce and reducing cost
- Staff in the collaborative bank have the flexibility to work bank shifts across any of the three trusts that have gone live
- There is improved choice and flexibility for NHS staff which has an impact on work-life balance with staff being able to plan their working shifts in advance
- There are greater opportunities to gain experience working in other trusts for staff working for the South West London Collaborative